

**L'INSTITUT D'ARCHEOLOGIE
DE L'UNIVERSITE DE CRACOVIE**

**RECHERCHES ARCHEOLOGIQUES
DE 1999–2003**

**ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
OF 1999–2003**

**АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ
1999–2003**



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Excavations at the Western Kom at Tell el-Farkha 1998-2003 (Nile Delta, Egypt)

Tell el-Farkha (Fig. 1) is located immediately to the north of the modern village of Ghazala, along the southern side of the Ghazala Drain, about 14 km east of El-Simbillawein and about 120 km north-east of Cairo (30°52'29"N 31°36'02"E). The site occupies an area of about 45000 m², with a maximum height of ca. 4.5 m above the level of the cultivation plain. The site is actually marked by three mounds (the Western Kom is about 1 m shorter than the others) along the northern edge of *gezira* and a gentle slope delimited by houses of the village to the south and east. It is possible that the site was originally larger than today, stretching southwards below the houses.

In the first season (1998) our work on the Western Kom in Tell el-Farkha was concentrated on the badly damaged southeastern, edge of the kom (Fig. 2). In the second season (1999) work focused around its centre. An area of 150 m² was designated for excavation (N-S axis 10 m; E-W axis 15 m). Large quantities of artefacts, numerous settlement features and a complex stratigraphic record, measuring over 4 m in depth, resulted in work being completed only in the eastern section during 1999. The western part of the trench was excavated in 2000. In the same year three new squares, each 5x5 m, were opened north of the eastern, previously investigated part of the trench. In 2001, work on the Western Kom focused on the area adjoining the already explored part to the north and west. A total surface of 505 m² was opened for excavation this year. The choice of so large area for exploration was determined by the results of previous seasons of research, because the important architectural structures discovered earlier extended in these directions. During 2001, we explored only upper layers, connected with our phase 5 and partially phase 4. Fieldworks at the Western Kom in 2002 and 2003 concentrated on older strata attained in this trench.

The enormous quantity of artifacts (chiefly pottery), extensive evidence of settlement structures and a stratigraphic complex of layers reaching 4-5 m below the present ground surface provided sufficient evidence to distinguish five main chronological phases of occupation of the western kom at Tell el-Farkha.

Phase 1 occupation probably covered the second part of the middle stage of Lower Egyptian civilisation (Ciałowicz 2001, 17), which is contemporary with Naqada IIB/IIC-d1 according to Kaiser (1957) or IIB/IIC-IID1 according to Hendrickx (1996). Phase Tell el-Farkha 1 is roughly contemporary with Buto II (Faltings 2002) but started a little earlier than Tell Ibrahim Awad 7 (van den Brink 1992, 53). This is evidenced not only by pottery finds (Fig. 3) – but also by the characteristic settlement features of that period.

Phase 2 continues to have Lower Egyptian pottery as a characteristic attribute, but complemented already with Naqadian forms (Fig. 4). The same may be said of the architecture, with structures typical of the northern cultural sphere appearing right next to mudbrick buildings that are believed to be characteristic of settlers originating from the south of the land.

This seems to be a transitional stage, confirming the coexistence of these two assem-

blages at a time, more or less, contemporary with the end of Naqada II, – probably Naqada IId2 or beginning of IID2. It should be treated as a terminal stage of the Lower Egyptian Culture in this region and at the same time the first, in which the earliest settlers from the south may have made their appearance at Tell el-Farkha (Ciałowicz 2001, 17). Phase Tell el-Farkha 2 is contemporary with Buto IIIa (von der Way 1997, 81).

Phase 3, already fully Naqadian in character (Fig. 5), can be connected with the end of Naqada II and beginning of Naqada III period. Probably Naqada IId2/IIIa1 - beginning of Naqada IIIa2(?) or the end of IID2 – beginning of IIIA1(?). A similar situation can be observed in Buto IIIB-c (von der Way 1997, 126) and at the beginning of Tell Ibrahim Awad 6 (van den Brink 1992, 52).

Phases 4 and 5 seem to be characteristic for the period of state formation in Egypt.

Phase 4 is distinguished by changes in the ceramic assemblage (Fig. 6) and should be dated to Naqada IIIa2, with the end placed somewhere during the Naqada IIIB (or IIIA1-IIIB period). Phase 4 is roughly contemporary with Buto IIId-f (von der Way 1997, 126) and with the later layers of Tell Ibrahim Awad 6 (van den Brink 1992: 52). Most of the settlement features have very close parallels in Buto layers IIId-IIIf (von der Way 1997, 118).

Phase 5 is characterized (Fig. 7) by an assemblage typical of transitional Naqada IIIB/IIIC1 (terminal IIIB-IIIC1), that is, the rule of the 0 and early Ist dynasty. As chronologically younger pottery has been encountered only on the surface in the part of the Western Kom that has been explored so far, it can be suggested that this part of our site had been abandoned by the early Ist Dynasty. It could be roughly compared with Buto IV (von der Way 1997, 136) and Tell Ibrahim Awad 5b (van den Brink 1992, 50). There is no distinct gap between this phase and the previous one.

Phase 1

The oldest phase is linked to Lower Egyptian culture, marked by a characteristic ceramic horizon and architecture typical of this civilization. This is followed by a thin, only a dozen or so centimetres thick layer still yielding Lower Egyptian pottery, but no longer with any kind of inhabited structures. It may be evidence, although not necessarily, of a temporary abandonment of the site.

Already present in the lowermost strata are numerous round and oval pits (measuring 1.20-2.20 m. in diameter), often intersecting each other, containing a black fill with a modest amount of small potsherds (Fig. 8). These are probably the remnants of storage pits. Bigger pits, sometimes lined with silt, may have served as dwellings. Very characteristic are concentrations of small, round or oval pits (20–30 cm in diameter) lined with silt, occasionally fired red. Most of these smaller pits did not contain any artefacts, with only isolated fragments of pottery occurring sporadically in some. Among the exceptions to this was the discovery of half of a small vessel in one of these pits and the lower pointed end of a storage vessel in another. Very similar settlement features found at other Lower Egyptian sites are explained either as cooking installations or as postholes (van den Brink 1992, 53; von der Way 1997, 65). Both interpretations seem likely, though in some instances the pits in question may have served as holders for large storage vessels with pointed ends.

These layers of phase 1 also yielded distinctive brick supports (Photo 1), known as „fire dogs”. These are roughly D-shaped in cross-section. Bricks of a similar shape have been found at Abydos (Peet 1914, 7) and Hierakonpolis (Hoffman 1982, 14). The same type of brick is also known from Buto. The earliest examples appear in Buto II, with further occur-

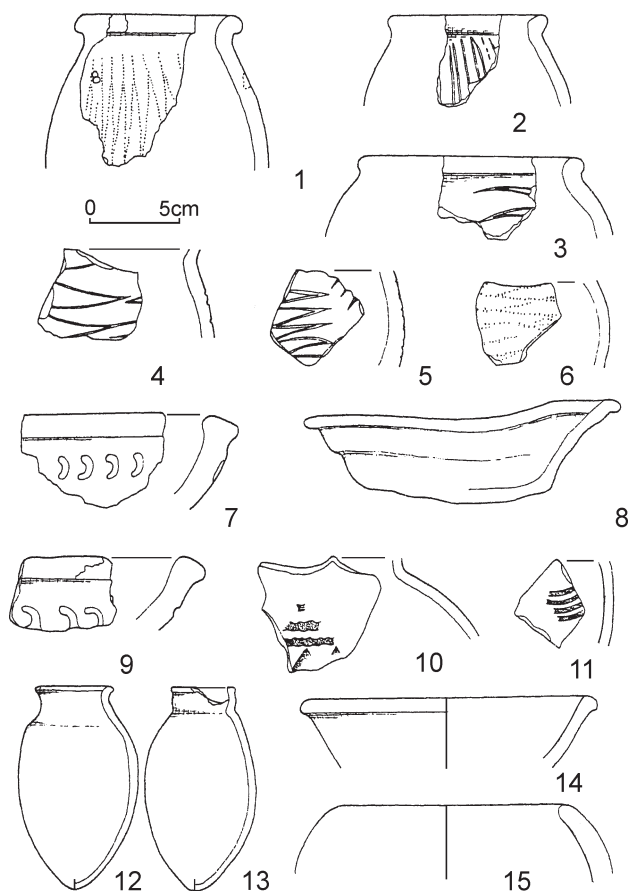


Fig. 4. Typical pottery of phase 2.

rences also noted in later layers (von der Way 1997, 73, 120). In Abydos and on Loc. 29 at Hierakonpolis they served as supports for a large vessel; on Loc. 11 they were used in the construction of a pottery kiln. Two breweries, are connected to these strata and were discovered in 2004. Their exploration is in progress (see below).

Higher up the stratigraphic sequence, in layers still dating from phase 1, a series of furrows (10–30 cm wide) forming rectangular ground plans were recorded next to the aforementioned pits. These most probably represent the remains of structures built of organic materials. Perhaps, the differences observed between older and youngest layers in phase 1 in Tell el-Farkha could suggest the division of phase 1 into subphases: 1a (older) and 1b (younger), which could be temporarily dated to the period contemporary with Naqada IIb/IIc and Naqada IId1.

The discoveries, belonging to later layers of phase 1 at Tell el-Farkha, are surprising and unparalleled on the whole. While fragmentary structures of the kind discussed above are known from other sites in Lower Egypt (e.g. Maadi or Buto), nowhere have they been preserved in such a good condition and nowhere are they as big. About 0.60 m below the

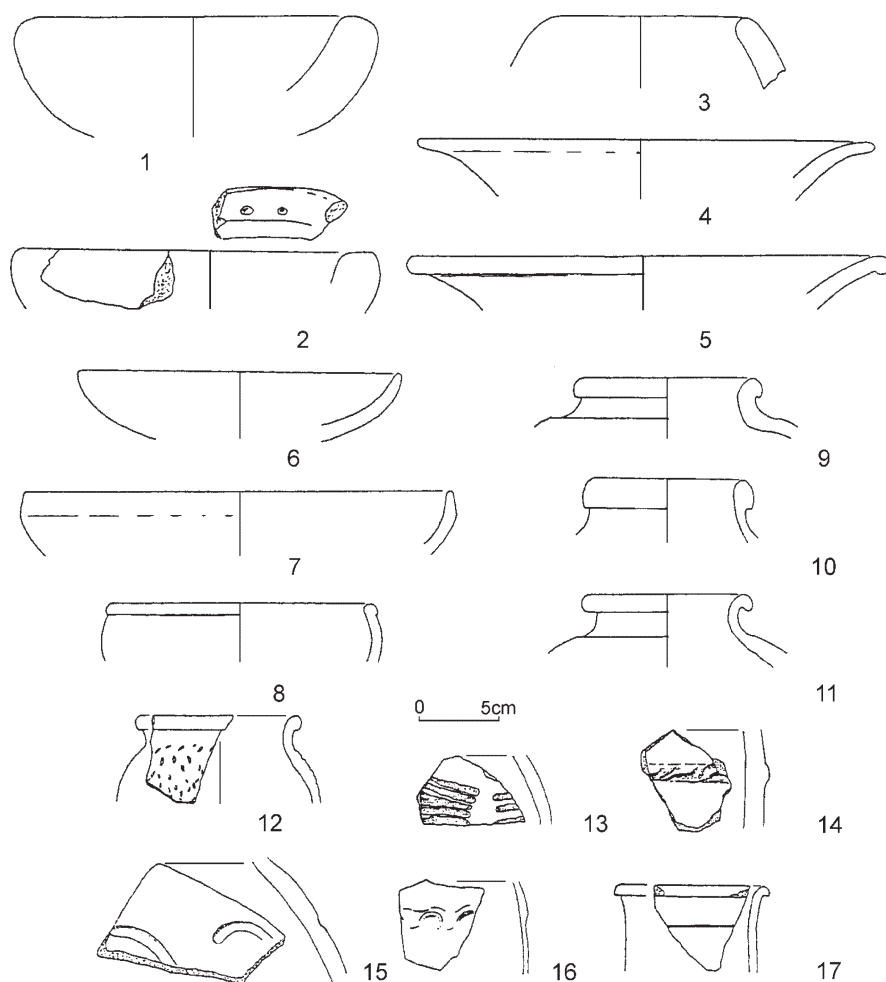


Fig. 5. Typical pottery of phase 3.

bottom of the Naqadian building of phase 3 (see below), traces of a Lower Egyptian structure were discovered extending over practically the entire excavated area (over 500 sq. m). They were covered with a thick layer of silt, which hindered explorations considerably. However, this is proof of the relatively frequent flooding of the *gezira* at Tell el-Farkha (before human activity resulted in a significant raising of its level) and of periods, difficult to estimate in length, when the site was abandoned. The building (Fig. 9), which like all the later ones was oriented to the northeast, must have had walls of organic materials. All that remains of the structure are relatively narrow furrows (from a dozen to 30 cm wide) filled with a brown soil or silt (perhaps from a Nile flooding). Explorations revealed two or even three phases of rebuilding. The eastern part of the youngest structure was divided into many small compartments is noteworthy (the smallest was 1.40x0.80 m in size), as well as the many pits lined with mud (from 0.20 to 1.00 m in diameter). Some of them, especially those within the

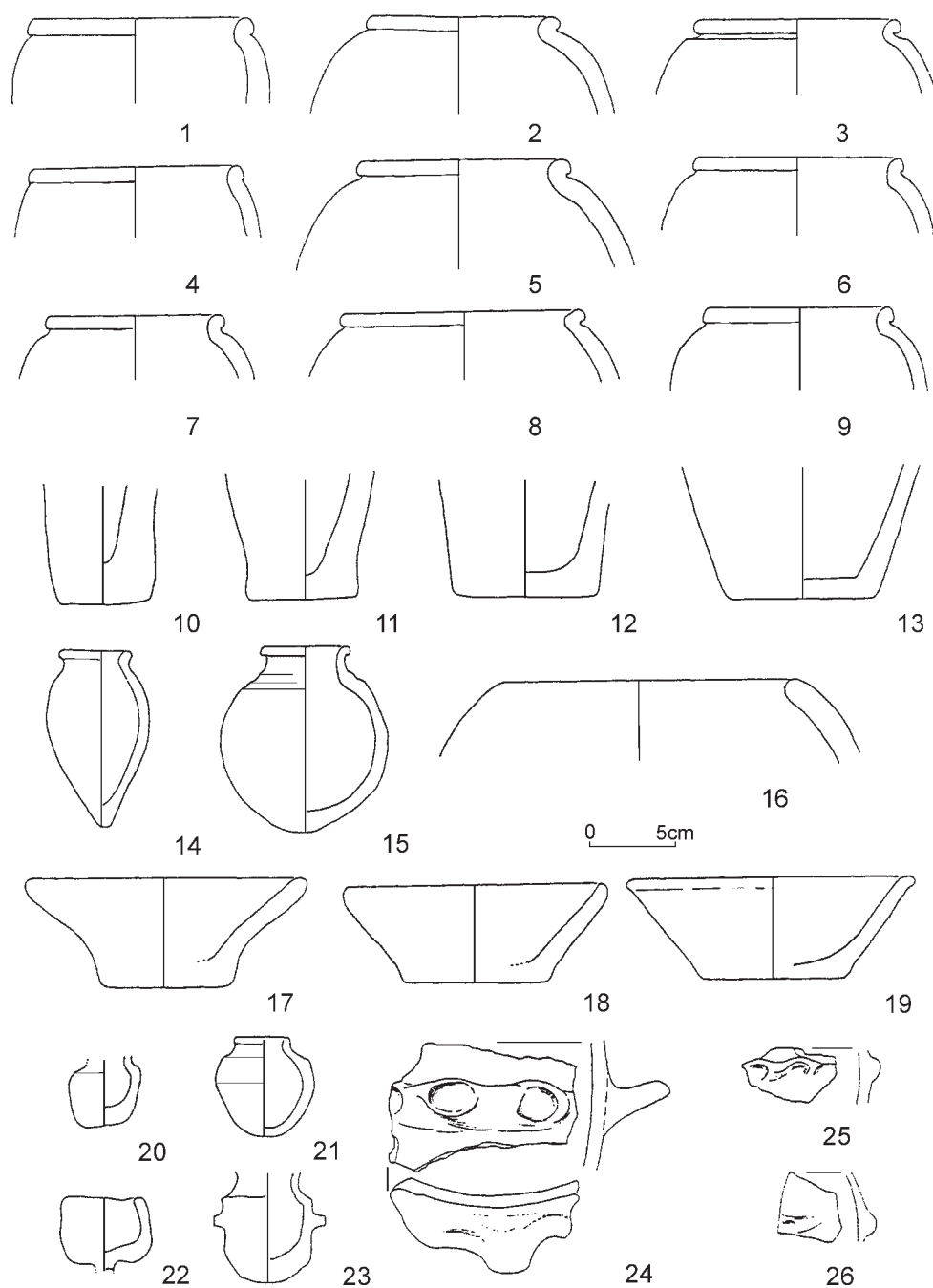


Fig. 6. Typical pottery of phase 4.

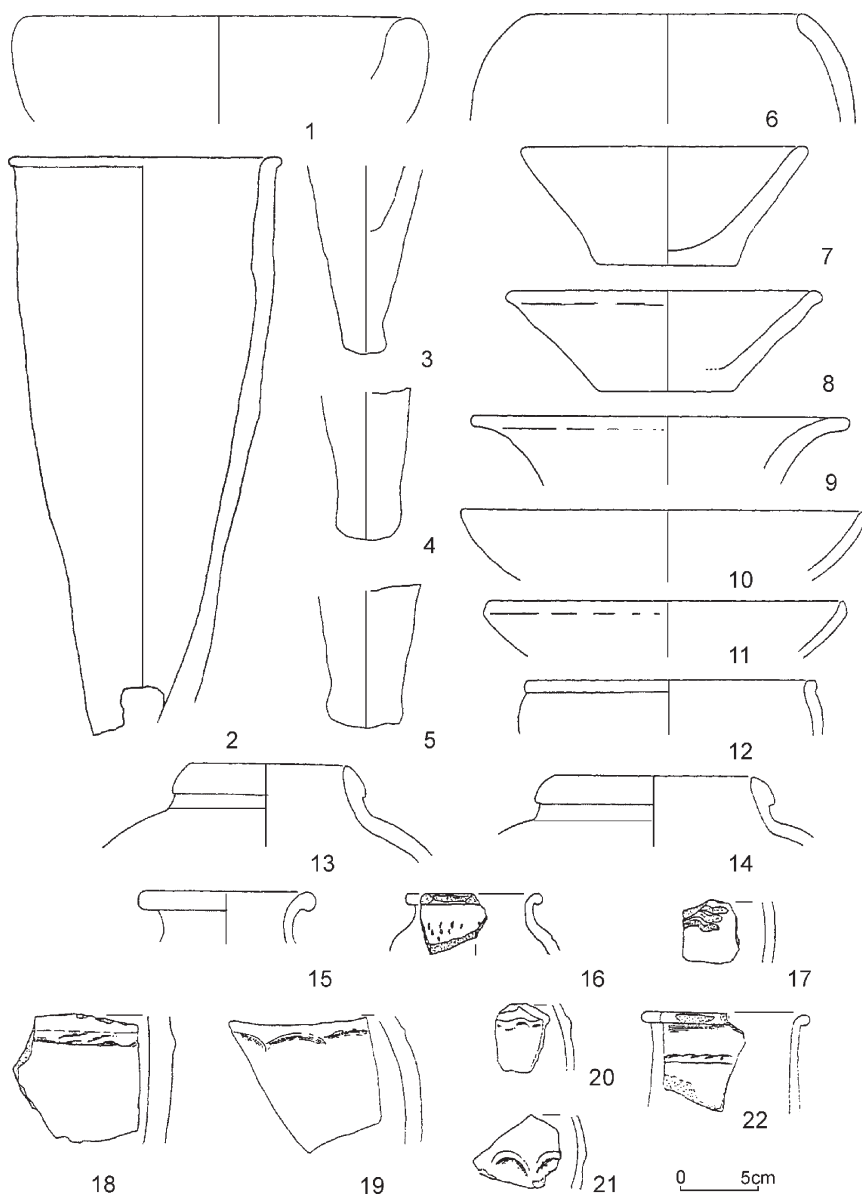


Fig. 7. Typical pottery of phase 5.

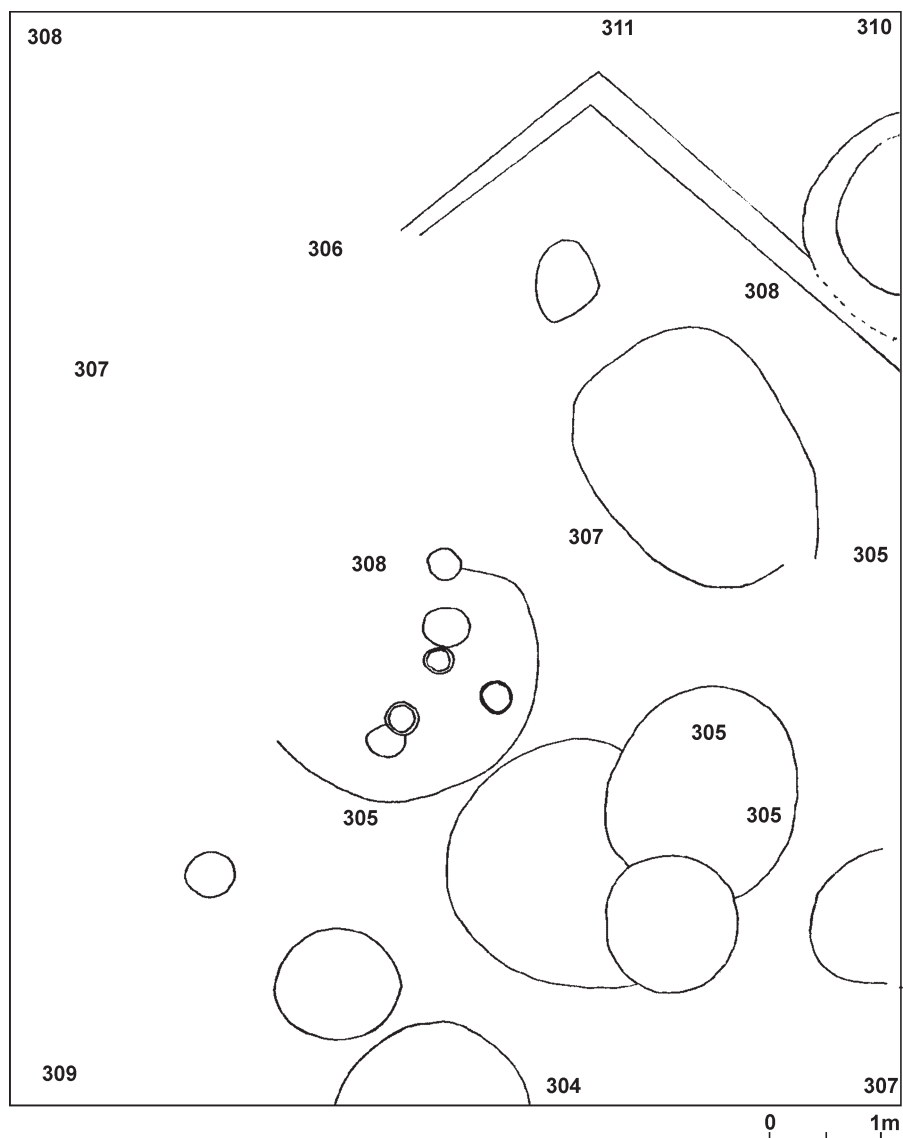


Fig. 8. Storage pits from phase 1.

outline of the furrows, must have been of structural importance, serving to mount the posts that had once supported the walls and roof. Others found inside the room could have served as vessel stands. The biggest of these pits, sometimes bearing obvious evidence of burning through and yielding D-shaped bricks, could have been used as fireplaces. The complex interior division may be due to the fact that parts of the house, clearly of a domestic character, could have been separated away from the other areas by low walls made of organic substances or silt.

The western part of the building, partly cut by the brewery, consists of probably large longitudinal compartments (at least 3) surrounded by furrows. Large (max. 1 m in diameter) and shallow pits, mostly filled with mud, draw special attention. The majority of them are clearly situated on furrow constructions and only few were cut by them. There is a possibility that they were connected to the brewery. They could, for example, serve as stands, where vats were put aside from fire, for the fermentation time.

Reduced dimensions on both the east and the south characterise the older phase of the described building (Photo 2). The number of mud-lined pits drops significantly and in their place, there appear storage pits filled with black soil and dissected by the structural furrows (as mentioned above, these pits are characteristic of the oldest occupational phase on Tell el-Farkha). On this level, we are probably dealing with two structures located next to each other. One is open to the east and divided into at least two rooms. The other, open to the west, is still not completely excavated, but yielded a considerable, if shapeless scatter of D-shaped bricks burned a bright red which can confirm the relation of this part of the complex with the oldest breweries hitherto found.

In seasons 2000, 2003 and 2004 four breweries were found at Tell el-Farkha. All form a distinct chronological sequence. The brewery discovered in 2000 is the last one and connected with our phase 2 (see below). The other three could be dated at phase 1 (Photo 3). The earliest of these breweries was at some point, destroyed by Nile flooding (Photo 4). It has to be borne in mind that the *gezira* on which the inhabitants at the time lived, did not raise greatly above the level of the river. The annual flooding of the Nile would, thus, have resulted in the relatively frequent destruction of many settlements in the Delta. Following a period, which is difficult to assess unequivocally, a second structure was built (Photo 5). When this was, in turn submerged beneath Nile silt deposits another building was raised (Photo 6).

All served the same purpose and all were similarly built. Each building consists of several subcircular features surrounded by fire-dog type bricks (Photo 7). Some of these bricks were inserted diagonally into the ground and supported thick-walled vats with wide rims and narrow bases. To-date only one of these vessels has been found *in situ* (Photo 8). The distinct majority of the bricks are fired, though possibly not intentionally, as in many places the same bricks appear in sun-dried form (Photo 9).

The interpretation of the three buildings found in 2003-04, has to be the same as that offered for the 2000 discovery. The function of all three was certainly the same and they were all used for the same purpose. There is no doubt that fires were lit inside them to heat the contents of the vats. Nine circular stands, all made of silt and each measuring about a metre in diameter, were found outside the construction unearthed in 2003 (Photo 10). These were probably used for placing the vats on once they had been removed from the fire. The plant material recovered from these features played an important role in their interpretation. Macroscopic palaeobotanical analysis, made by L. Kubiak-Martens, clearly demonstrated that the plant remains came from two successive phases in the process of beer-making. All of these structures were thus deemed to be breweries. Coarsely ground barley grains were placed in vats of hot water (c. 60°C) and heated until a homogeneous starter had been obtained. The vessels were then removed from the heat and placed on the aforementioned silt pot-stands, where they were left for about a week for the fermentation process to take place, resulting in the production of a low-alcohol beer. Historically, beer played a significant role both as a drink and as one of the fundamental gifts included among burial offerings. The Tell el-Farkha structures represent the oldest breweries ever to be found in the Nile Delta and

should be probably dated a little later than the brewery discovered several years ago in Hierakonpolis. The brewery from Hierakonpolis is dated on Naqada Ib-IIa (Geller 1992, 23), while these from Tell el-Farkha on Naqada IIc-IIId1. However, unlike the discovery at Hierakonpolis, the Tell el-Farkha excavations revealed an entire complex of successive breweries, suggesting that this site must have been an important beer production centre during the second half of the 4th millennium BC. It should be stressed that beer production already had been known in Tell el-Farkha before Naqadian settlers from the South arrived there.

However, the discovery of the hitherto described large building of organic materials defies the previously held beliefs that prior to the emergence of the Naqada culture, the inhabitants of the Nile Delta represented a simple, largely unstratified society, living in primitive, sunken-floored dwellings or shelters.

A modest amount of artefacts were found alongside the aforementioned structures. These consisted mostly of potsherds, although a few complete vessels were also discovered, some as solitary finds (Photo 11) while others formed distinct concentrations. A modest number of flint tools, both whole and fragmentary, were also recovered from these deposits.

Phase 2

Another layer of mud (an unquestionable result of flooding) separates the beginning of phase 2 from the end of phase 3. A dense cover of mud, making excavations very hard, achieved a thickness ranging between several and tens of centimetres. The present state of research produced evidence that phase 2 was a transitional period, when features, distinctive not only for the Lower Egyptian culture but also for the progressively arriving southern Naqadian civilization, occur simultaneously. They can be characterized by the pottery and the presence of construction of both types: raised of mudbricks and of organic materials.

Very little evidence of buildings survives from this phase. The most commonly encountered traces consist of successive layers of flooring with barely visible outlines of walls. The best-preserved wall was discovered in one of the oldest strata belonging to phase 2. This wall, 9.5 m long and 50 cm wide, was built of mudbrick on a NE-SW axis. Its northern extent links up with a semicircular construction bordered by a broad band (30-40 cm) of compacted silt. Inside the structure, several layers of compacted silt floor containing small fragments of pottery were recorded. Other traces of walls were revealed below buildings dated to phase 3. These were scant fragments of walls about 1 m wide mostly running across peripheral parts of the excavated trench. They do not compose one clearly distinctive structure, though they could be bound surrounding the inside furrow-constructions or breweries. All these walls were visibly covered with mud separating phases 3 and 2 (Photo 12).

Clearly connected with phase 2 at Tell el-Farkha is the 4x4 m structure comprised (as it turned out in the lower layers) of three adjacent circles (Photo 12). This was discovered during the campaign in 2000. Its edges were surrounded by stacked D-shaped bricks (similar to those found in phase 1), burned through inconsistently, from mud-coloured examples to ones that are red and even entirely black. It is noteworthy that mudbricks constitute a significant majority in the lowermost layer, suggesting apparently that the firing was quite accidental. Outside the circles three post-holes were recorded. The posts presumably supported the roof. Numerous flat pieces of clay, thin, baked, with impressions of plants and human fingers, came from the layer of ashes and burnt earth inside the structure, and are suggestive of a roof that had been made of organic substances coated with mud.

Below the burnt earth, a layer of D-shaped bricks following different arrangements, was

uncovered. The next level finally yielded conclusive evidence of a circle (0.40-0.60 m in diameter) of the D-shaped bricks formed inside each of the circular elements of the structure. A flat brick lay in the centre. Around these, there were a number of bricks set into the ground at an angle, intended as a support for the large, relatively narrow-bottomed vats that had stood on the round constructions (some sherds of thick-walled vessels of this variety were found in the fill). Another interesting feature is the burnt white clay deposited inside the installations.

The difference in brick shapes should also be emphasised. Some were simple, with sections ranging from practically semicircular to trapezoid and almost triangular. While others flatter and evidently concave at one end. The depression had been made carelessly with finger impressions clearly visible on the side walls. The two kinds of bricks can be put together so that the convexities of ones fit the concavities of the other. The flat bricks, presumably either lay on the ground or were dug into it and the convex ones, lying in the depressions, stuck out upwards supporting the vat or vessel.

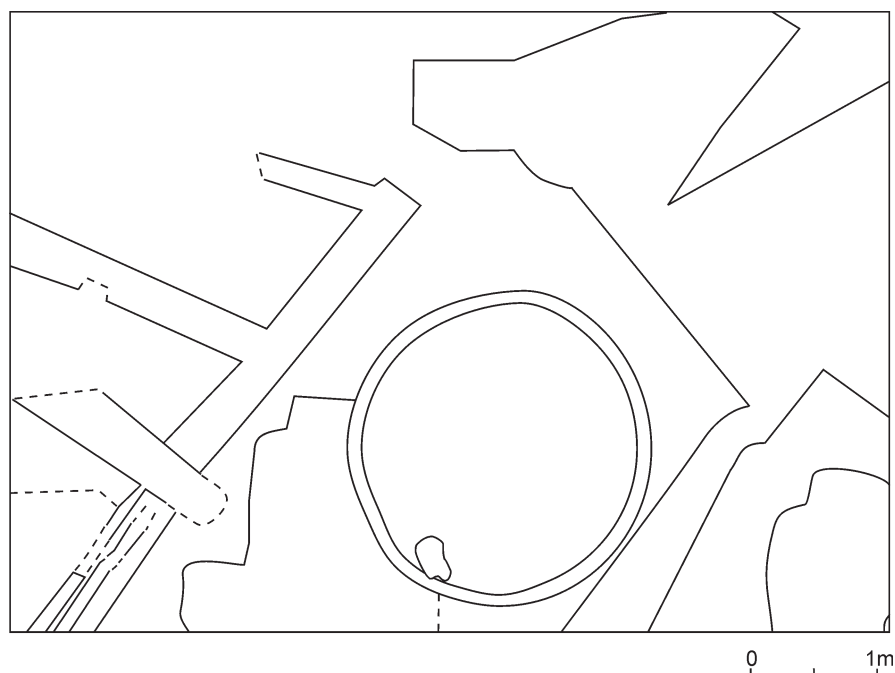
Interpreting the unearthed building, attention was drawn mainly to the use of fire in its interior. The absence of any significant quantity of potsherds, particularly wasters, precludes its use as a pottery kiln. Fire was undoubtedly used inside this structure to heat whatever was inside the vats. However, this could not, have been grain, as the temperature generated here was too high and would have resulted in the grain being burned. The narrow bases of the vats and the wide angle at which they were tilted (as can be deduced from the position of the supports which survived *in situ*) seems to indicate that these vessels held a liquid, which probably required regular stirring. To explain the structure's function. The only idea that comes to mind is to regard it as a brewery. This conclusion was attested during the two most recent field campaigns, when three further structures of the same function were discovered (see above).

Phase 3

This period is characterised by the occurrence of homogeneous Naqada pottery and it seems that the cultural tradition from the south of Egypt had been fully adopted by then at Tell el-Farkha.

At a depth of ca. 2.10 m below ground level (ca. 5 m a.s.l.), the outlines of a mudbrick structure became evident under two layers of which the bottom one was undoubtedly a layer of burning with black, occasionally red burnt-through soil and lighter ashes (Photos 13-14). On top of this was a layer of steel-grey clay that is practically sterile as regards to archaeological artifacts; its thickness varies from a few centimetres in the south to over 20 cm in the north. The layer is definite proof of the structure having been burnt at some point and then flooded by the waters of the Nile. The building had at least two constructional phases. To judge by the preserved ceramic evidence, the older stage starts of the beginning of phase 3 and was quickly rebuilt. The later stage is to be dated to phase 3, while the catastrophic fire and the flood should presumably be placed on the turn of phase 3/4 (probably during Naqada IIIa2).

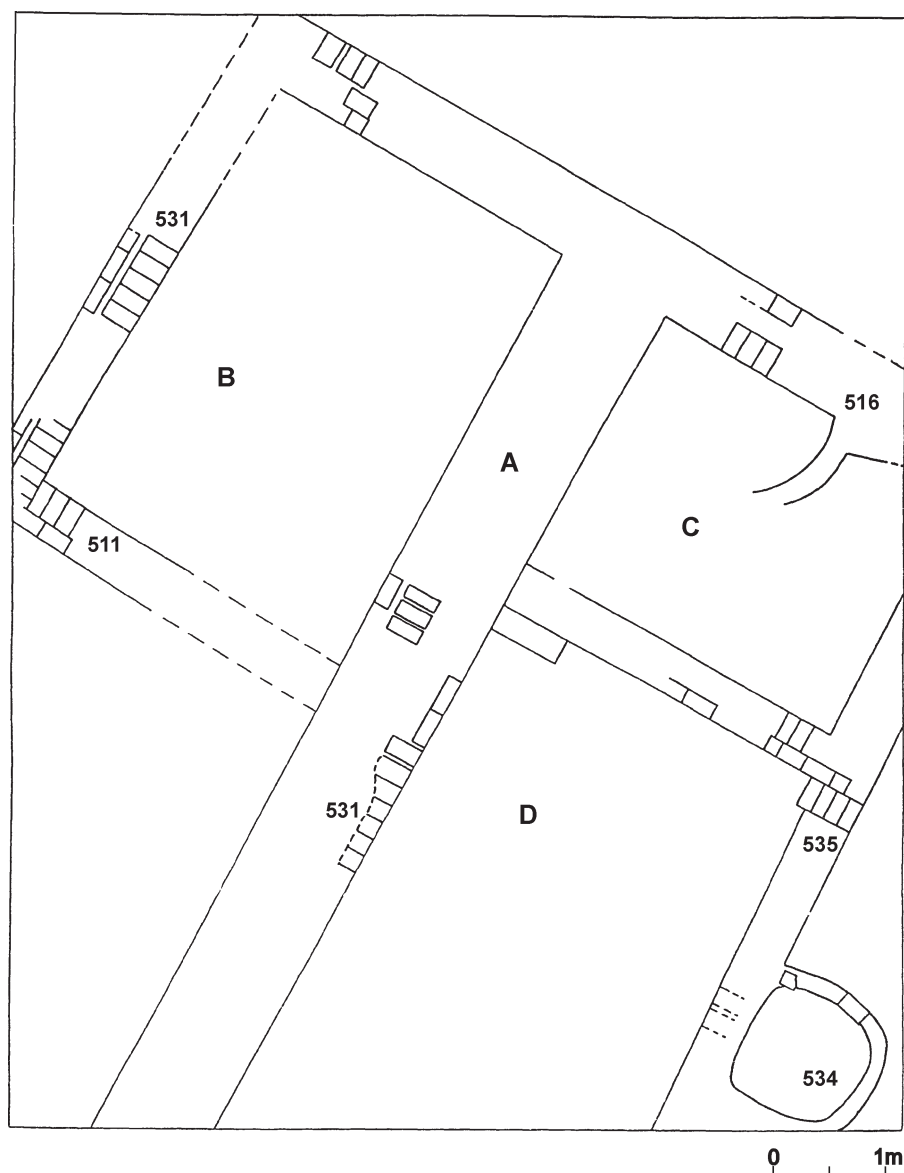
The structure of a younger date has a size that may be termed almost monumental. It comprises of two clearly different parts (Fig. 10). Compartments in both of them follow a NE-SW direction as is common for Tell el-Farkha. The western part of the structure is divided from the eastern one by a wall 2,5 m thick. At the southern extreme, it ends in a big rounded corner. The wall was actually made of two differently constructed sections. The



Fot. 12. Silo from phase 5.

inside part was erected of yellowish brick with an obviously considerable amount of sand, set in a dark-grey mud mortar. The outside face is definitely mudbrick bonded in a light yellowish mortar, tempered with sand. Within the wall, at the junction of the inner and outer part, three round pits were distinguished (1 m in diameter), spaced regularly next to each other, the distance between them being 1.25 m and 1.00 m. As the same layer of burning and mud that covered the building lay on top of these installations, they must have been integrally connected with the structure. The small potsherds and ashes found inside these pits do not help in the identification of their function. They could have been just as well structural or as a place for installing big storage vessels. In the latter case, however, the wall would have been of a different width in the top part – from 0.5 to 1 m. This seems fairly unlikely, especially as in the bottom part it appears quite homogeneous, constructed, as described above, of the two kinds of brick.

The eastern part of the building consists of a few rooms featuring a considerable concentration of finds and storage vessels that were found standing in their original position. Two rooms (one rectangular, the other, almost square) were found to adjoin a thick (80 cm) wall running NE-SW. In first room, successive floors were made of clay and most probably covered with a kind of lime mortar. Inside this space, especially in the southern part, there were considerable quantities of artifacts – there were numerous potsherds, but also two complete storage vessels with conical bottoms standing in pits lined with thick coatings of mud. A third vessel was fragmentarily preserved and there were six small vases, two with fish bones, lying on the floor next to a flint knife and the flat ledge of a big stone vessel. A structure with a rounded corner (1.20x1.50 m) abutted the room on the south; it was



Fot. 13. Building from phase 4.

surrounded with a low brick wall equal in width to the thickness of one length of brick (ca. 30 cm). A similar wall surrounded a semicircular space adjoining the main wall on the southeast. To the north, a few groups of bricks lying in all different directions could perhaps reflect the presence of a floor. The walls of this complex have been preserved to a height of 40-50 cm; they were constructed of layers of brick clearly visible in places, bonded in a kind of lime mortar and founded on an obvious layer of destruction. In the second room two

storage vessels were standing inside it. Neither had a bottom and one stood in a lump of pure clay, the other in a bowl. In addition there was a concentration of finds, including whole small vessels. The evidence clearly points to a sudden abandonment of the complex. To sum up, it seems that the eastern section of the edifice served as store-houses.

The western one was comprised of a complex of rooms having a different character (Photo 15). Regular arrangements of mudbricks forming a clearly visible outline of a building appeared underneath the layers of destruction. The edifice was of significant size, divided into several inner compartments. Huge walls (2 m thick) drew attention as they separate the building from a southern additional room of later date, where two stoves with pots standing in them were discovered. Numerous postholes dug within one of the rooms along with a wall surrounding them from west are to be dated to the same period that is the last phase of the structure's occupation. It is very likely that the posts had been supporting a roof or an upper storey ruined in unknown circumstances. Both the rooms with stoves and the posts, were raised before the edifices' final devastation.

The inside plan and dimensions of the whole building became more visible in lower strata hiding remains of the complex related to the age of its maximal extend and splendour (Photo 16). The inner room (partly excavated in 2000) was 7x2 m in size. Within it a badly damaged brick floor was found. The so-called "western room" was situated to the west behind a wall ca. 80 cm wide. Both compartments were limited by a northern room of similar measurement, with a thick separating wall, too. In the last compartment, remains of stoves and hearths were registered. An internal courtyard was uncovered further to the west and it was enclosed by several rooms. Nevertheless, their size and mutual relation are difficult to estimate as long as their part remains unexcavated. The monumental dimensions of the edifice are particularly significant, since (including the sectors examined during former campaigns) it covered an area over 500 m². Huge mudbrick walls (1-2.5 m wide) isolated most of the compartments.

Judging by the hitherto collected data the complex constitutes the largest construction of this type, which has ever been discovered in Egypt in Naqadian context. The edifice's significance as well as its inhabitants is – at least currently – difficult for unequivocal evaluation. Probably, the works' completion at the western part of the kom will make it possible. However, one should emphasize some potential solutions. Numerous findings like: so-called counters (p. ex. perforated or not pellets, balls and cones of clay), fragments of undecorated clay seals and also some pieces of foreign pottery vessels (Palestinian) were discovered within the characterized structure. This seems to produce evidence that the people of Tell el-Farkha were considerably engaged in commercial activities. Furthermore, it indicates that we are dealing here with a residence, combined with stores, of a Naqadian supervising trade between Upper Egypt and the Delta and Palestine. The building, as it has been already mentioned, was destroyed in a fire. It is hard to estimate whether it was a result of natural catastrophe (flood, earthquake) or an intentional human action. Taking into consideration the latter one should stress that it is scarcely provable. However, the epoch when the disastrous fire happened deserves a closer look. The catastrophic event is to be dated to Naqada IIIa2, which is the period when existence of earliest protokindoms in Upper Egypt can be assumed. The first richly equipped burials recorded in the southern necropolis demonstrate the final stage of the elites' formation process. The largest and most significant tomb (U-j) was found in Abydos. Its outstanding features clearly support the dignity and royal power of the person who had been buried in it (Dreyer 1998). The oldest hieroglyphs, which were

found there suggest not solely a considerable development of society's organization but administrative and bureaucratic control over many aspects of life. A discovery of over 400 vessels though originating from Palestine was clearly ordered by Egyptians. Then it was deposited in tomb U-j supports the postulated crucial importance of goods imported from the Levant that is the role of trade itself. More or less contemporary, although almost completely plundered, are the tombs recently unearthed in Hierakonpolis (Adams 1996). There are other testimonies uncovered at the latter site that indicate its colossal significance for the formative processes of the Egyptian state (Adams 1999). It is very likely that both centers were competing in various fields, the most substantial may be the issue of controlling trade routes leading to the Sinai and Palestine. Located nearby them Tell el-Farkha presumably was important for commercial exchange, its supervision and control along with the north-eastern trade route itself. That is why, it is possible that the final destruction of the described complex found in Tell el-Farkha was a result of conflict between those two centres of emerging kinship. Unfortunately, it is rather difficult to specify. Accepting this theory, it should be strongly stressed that it remains in close relation to a conflict on a regional scale, but connected to the Naqada culture. Therefore, it cannot be transferred to a position of evidence for an Upper Egyptian conquest of the Nile Delta.

When considering the reasons of the Naqadian building of Tell el-Farkha's devastation natural factors should also be noted. The fire could have started accidentally or as the result of a regional earthquake. Evidence confirming the latter possibility was found in layers dated to the terminal (fifth) occupational phase at the Western Kom and while uncovering the structure in question, as well. The space stretching out to the south and northeast from the main building were covered with pieces of collapsed wall, frequently lying on their side and squeezing numerous small artifacts. In this context, crushed pottery vessels of storage and table use can be mentioned, as well as flint or stone tools and fragments of cosmetic palettes. One of the most interesting findings is a skeleton of a pig undoubtedly killed by a falling wall (Photo 4).

Phases 4 and 5

The beginning of phase 4 is marked by a layer of mud, practically archaeologically sterile, lying on the surface of the burnt Naqadian structure from phase 3. There is no such a distinctive division between phases 4 and 5. They were defined, as it was mentioned above, only on the bases of pottery changes. The majority of buildings revealed in the upper layers of the Western Kom in Tell el-Farkha arises during phase 4 and with several changes exists during phase 5. Hence, it seems proper to discuss the most significant constructions of these two phases together, stressing only those which are evidently related to one of the periods.

In the layers of phase 5 we found in 1999 a part of a house (Fig. 11A) with at least two rooms laid out in en-suite. Completely preserved room is about 2.5 m wide and about 8 m long. The longer walls, running in unusual for Tell el-Farkha direction (NW-SE), are three bricks thick (c. 45 cm). The thickness of the transverse wall is approximately 50 cm. The long north wall had a pit (c. 40 cm in diameter) positioned next to it. This was lined with a thick layer of silt and contained part of a grinder stained yellow. Surprising in the first moment orientation of these building became clear after the next seasons: the house is connected with the complex of the building described below and joined from the south-east to the main wall surrounding the deposit found during the 2001 campaign. This small deposit of figurines and vessels made of faience, clay and stone was discovered just below the surface. Of special interest are two

statuettes of baboons (Photo 17), very similar to those known p. ex. from Hierakonpolis (Adams 1974, pl. 18) or Elephantine (Dreyer 1986, pl. 24-26).

Another figurine worth special attention is a representation of a prostrate man (Photo 18). His only covering is a penis sheath and he wears his hair and beard long, while the features of his face are distinctly archaic. The next clay statuette found nearby represents a standing man (Photo 19), longhaired and bearded, naked; the manner of execution of this figurine points to its Predynastic origins. Another group deserving emphasis is a set of five egg and barrel-shaped clay rattles with an engraved decoration (Photos 20-21). Worth stressing is that fragments of similar rattles come from graves dated to the beginning of the First Dynasty which were discovered on the Eastern Kom in Tell el-Farkha. One should also mention models of piriform maces, miniature vessels made of various materials, a zoomorphic vessel representing a water bird (duck or goose), clay double-vases, faience beads, and objects, that in all likelihood are game counters. Some objects of the deposit, like the baboon figures and the prostrate man, were deposited presumably in the last phase of the building's use, at the very end of the dynasty 0 or the beginning dynasty I. Others come from earlier periods, with the oldest being a zoomorphic vessel and the figurine of a standing man.

The deposit was uncovered within massive walls (Fig. 11) marking off a relatively small room (B) that was part of a building of considerable size (at least 25 by 15 m). The structure continues west and south beyond even the area explored till now. The mudbrick wall survives to a height of over 2 m.

The said structure is made up of a series of rooms, which agglutinated over a certain period of time or were rebuilt and developed after natural disasters of cataclysmic consequence. One such event may have been a fairly mild earthquake which resulted in the collapse of the walls of part of the rooms lying southeast and northwest of the area where the deposit was discovered. The debris covered many items, including large storage vessels, thin-walled red bowls and cosmetic palettes of greywacke (photo 22). To judge by the geometric forms of these palettes, they were made in the third phase of the Naqada culture.

The differences in the material used to produce bricks deserve note (it is either silt with sand in considerable amounts or silt practically devoid of sand), as well as the varied care put into the execution of the walls, presumably due to different room function. Brick size remains more or less constant at ca. 15 by 30 cm throughout the period. In a few cases, the bones of wild cattle (shoulder and long bones) were found set into the wall instead of bricks.

Another observation that should be emphasised is the functional differentiation of particular rooms and the related differences in the thickness of walls and wall execution techniques. The main walls and those surrounding the deposit are the thickest, reaching ca. 120 cm. A trench excavated by the Italian expedition (C) in 1988-89 had intersected the northwest corner of the room with the deposit and its west wall. Walls, either one, one-and-a-half or two bricks thick (from 30 to 60 cm), surround other rooms that are of distinctly domestic character. Small hearths were discovered chiefly in the small units, enclosed by thin walls that separated them from the neighbouring spaces. A remarkably concentration of these hearths was discovered in the northwestern part of the complex. Whole vessels, querns and grinders were recovered from the vicinity of the hearths. In some of the other, larger rooms storage vessels were preserved standing *in situ* or else there were mud stands that had been used to support such vessels.

A highly schematic figurine of a ram was discovered within the thick wall surrounding the complex, north of the deposit. One of the most interesting finds from the same area was

a cylindrical jar with 187 fish fin bones (Photo 23), some with the thicker end broken off, others whole. Even without further processing, the fin bones with their sharp serrated edge constituted excellent material for making harpoon heads (e.g. for fishing) or arrowheads for bird hunting. The bones may have been collected on purpose as valuable raw material. Immediately next to the jar a half of a clay boat model was discovered (Photo 24).

The beginnings of these complexes of combined administrative and cultic character can be traced back to phase 4. From its west side the building was limited by, a thick mudbrick wall continuing in NW direction as in phase 3. The organization of inner compartments, however, changed visibly, as there were a few relatively narrow though elongated rooms surrounding an internal courtyard (Photo 25). Three of them were adjacent to the main wall oriented NE-SW. The next four rooms were situated transversely to those previously mentioned. Two of the later, were, one by one, located south of the courtyard, while two other, north of it. Large walls (around 1 m wide) separating most of the compartments are particularly noteworthy. The whole hitherto discovered complex covers an area of ca. 400 m². Notwithstanding, it should be stressed that it was much greater. Each of the transverse rooms, likewise those adjacent to the main wall from north and south as well, exceed the excavated space. Within the compartments remains of stoves and hearths were situated. Furthermore, a big schist palette shaped as a falcon was found next to the outer wall of the structure.

Apart from the hitherto described edifice from phase 5 appear only the poorly preserved remnants of mudbrick walls. The first of these comprised ill-preserved remains visible just beneath the surface. The uppermost strata yielded not only rests of rectangular structural features but also round ones (c. 2.50 m in diameter) in the form of a silt floor surface surrounded by a thin layer of compacted mud (Fig. 12). Similar construction is known from Buto IVa and IVb (von der Way 1997, 130-131). Beneath the floor, a reddish-black fill was revealed which bore clear traces of fire damage. Burnt material was also recorded outside this feature, whilst inside a small amount of pottery and a large quern stone was recovered. A distinct concentration of sherds was noted in the northern part of the structure. It (a silo?) was lying directly over the eastern section of the already presented compartment A. Possibly, it can be regarded as being in connection to the last occupational phase of the administrative and cultic centre in Tell el-Farkha. However, its appearance in the upper most layer of the tell and considerable damage make drawing final conclusions impossible.

There is no doubt that a partially preserved building, localized at about 10 m to the west from the administrative and cultic centre's external wall, comes from phase 4 (Fig. 13). It occurred in layers dated to the older phase of the centre. Between these two structures no other architectural traces were attested. That is why, at present, it is impossible to determine their mutual relation, though they were doubtlessly contemporary with each other.

A 9 m long wall (A) running along a NE-SW axis, divided the building on two parts. It is approximately 90 cm thick and made of bricks measuring about 30x15 cm. A room (B) of around 12 m² (3x4 m) was situated to the west of this wall. To the east lay a smaller room (C; 3x2.5 m) with badly preserved traces of a semicircular construction and one larger room (D; 3 x over 5 m). A semicircular pit (E; c. 1 m in diameter) adjoins the south chamber's south-east section. A narrow wall (10-15 cm) built to a thickness of one brick encircles the pit.

Several stoves were discovered in the levels belonging to the phase 4. The largest of them was virtually square with four vessels found standing inside. None of the vessels placed in these stoves (Photo 26) had bottoms – each one was standing on a base made of pure silt. They are all of the same type, familiar from Tell Ibrahim Awad, though at that site

they were dated to an earlier period: (to local phase 7) contemporary with Naqada IId1 (van den Brink 1992, 54). The height to which these vessels are preserved ranges from just under 20 cm to 40 cm. This suggests that they were used on numerous occasions, the bottom part of each being broken off with each successive usage. This way it was probably easier to empty the vessel of its contents without removing it from the stove. In such vessels the grain could be parched, in order to free it of chaff. This hypothesis is confirmed by the presence of several intermixed layers of charcoal, ash, burnt silt and pure silt inside the stoves.

A number of other relict walls and silt floor surfaces, in a much poorer state of preservation, were also found. These belonged to rectangular houses, the precise dimensions of which are difficult to assess.

The layers excavated during the last five campaigns on the western kom have yielded a noticeable quantity of small finds, including potsherds in bulk (in particular, some examples of imported Palestinian and Upper Egyptian pottery) and a relatively large number of flint tools, which are especially numerous in the later phases of the site. Sickles are the most common, with knives occurring in smaller quantities. In earlier phases flint tools appear only sporadically.

Lower Egyptian and Naqadian layers included whole vessels (mostly of small size), numerous pieces of querns, specimens of stone grinders pestles and mud seals used to close all kinds of containers. Some of them, dated to phases 3-5, have impressions of cylindrical seals. Naqada contexts yielded fragments of stone vessels, palettes, parts of games, stone pendants (amulets), for instance in the shape of a duck and of a stylized female figure(?) and very few metal finds (p. ex. a copper pin fragment). Of particular interest is a fragment of a small male figurine (torso only) made of fired clay and subsequently painted red (Photo 27). Part of the *heka*-sceptre can be seen quite clearly depicted on the chest. The discovery of this figurine in a phase 4 context indicates that this is one of the oldest representations of the ruler known to-date. Three cylindrical jars were found beneath the corner of one of the earliest houses associated with phase 4. One with net paint decoration could be dated precisely to Naqada IIIa2 (Kaiser 1957, pl. 24).

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